

Elite Opponents

Variant Dragons

Creature Incarnations
By Robert Wiese



Welcome back. I hope you're ready for this month's creature: the dragon!

Dragons are iconic to **D&D** (heck, it is called **Dungeons & Dragons**, after all), and they have always been considered among the tougher foes that adventurers face. With the current rules (and *Draconomicon* offers even more options than the *Monster Manual* does), you can really create your own customized dragons so that one red dragon (or black, or white . . .) is not exactly the same as another. You can customize them within a color choice with feats, skills, and spells. You can even add templates to them. And that is what we will consider this month.

It is easy enough to make fiendish and celestial dragons, but here at the Creature Incarnations Project we have discovered some truly weird dragons that we would like to share with you. They are all based on the standard adult red dragon, an iconic image in **Dungeons & Dragons**. I hope your player characters have *protection from fire* spells up? Oh, and *protection from cold* for the last specimen? Good. Now, step this way . . .

d20 Modern: Alien Dragon

In the modern world, dragons are themselves strange mystical creatures that defy imagination even as they embody it. A flying dragon-shaped tentacled mass is a horror from within nightmares -- something that should not be unleashed on the world. Who knows where this one comes from? Perhaps in some place, some technologically advanced aliens can bring dreams to life, and this was one of their results. Perhaps it comes from beyond the universe.





The pseudonatural red dragon can assume the form of a tentacled mass that has its original shape, and this is the form that the creature stays in most of the time. It uses its unnaturalness to its advantage in combat, as well as its fiery breath and its FX abilities. It's smart enough to know when to worry about bullets and when not to, and it flees if its life is in danger. However, it remembers those it fled from, and returns to take revenge later.

Pseudonatural Adult Red Dragon CR 17

CEHuge **outsider** (augmented dragon, fire)

Action Points 0

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +29, Spot +29

Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 24)

Languages Draconic

Defense 29, touch 8, **flat-footed** 29

(-2 size, +22 natural)

hp 253 (22 **HD**); **DR** 10/magic

Mas 21

Immune fire; sleep and paralysis effects

Resist acid 15, electricity 15; **SR** 25

Fort +18, **Ref** +13, **Will** +17

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 40 ft. (8 **squares**), fly 150 ft. (poor), Flyby Attack, Hover, Wingover

Melee bite +31 (2d8+11) and

2 claws each +29 (2d6+5) and

2 wings each +29 (1d8+5) and

tail slap +29 (2d6+16)

Fighting Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +22; **Grp** +41

Atk Options Power Attack, Snatch, crush, *true strike*

Special Actions breath weapon

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th):

3rd (5/day) -- *dispel magic*, *displacement*

2nd (7/day) -- *glitterdust* (DC 15), *invisibility*, *resist energy*

1st (7/day) -- *jump*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *ray of fatigue* (ranged touch +20), *shield*

0 (6/day) -- *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):

6/day -- *locate object*

Abilities **Str** 33, **Dex** 10, **Con** 21, **Int** 16, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 16

SQ alternate form

Feats Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Wingover

Skills Bluff +23, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +22, Escape Artist +20, Listen +29, Search +28, Sense Motive +24, Spellcraft +13, Spot +29, Tumble +15, Use Magic Device +23

Rep +0

Hook The mass of tentacles swoops down from the sky and breathes on your Mazerati as you flee in terror.

Frightful Presence (Ex) A pseudonatural adult red dragon can inspire terror by charging, attacking, or flying overhead. Creatures within 180 feet of the dragon that have 22 HD or fewer must attempt a DC 24 Will save. Success indicates that the target is immune to the pseudonatural adult red dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds. Those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds.

Snatch (Ex) Against Small or smaller creatures, bite for 2d8+11 per round or claw for 2d6+5 per round.

Crush (Ex) Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d6+16 points of bludgeoning damage and must succeed on a DC 26 Reflex save or be pinned.

True Strike (Su) As the *true strike* spell; once/day.

Breath Weapon (Su) 50-ft. cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 12d10 fire, Reflex DC 26 half.

Alternate Form (Su) As a standard action a pseudonatural creature can take the form of a grotesque, tentacled mass. Its abilities remain unchanged. Other creatures receive a -1 morale penalty on their attack rolls against the pseudonatural creature while it is in this form.

Oozy Dragon

Talk about weird-looking dragons. This creature started out with draconic heritage, but the mixture of ooze within its bloodlines created something completely unnatural. It cannot fly, but it can still use its fiery breath weapon and cast spells (which are Charisma-based rather than Intelligence-based). It is more cunning than smart; in fact, it must be said, it is pretty stupid. Dungeon Masters may want to keep an eye on how challenging it turns out to be -- it may not be as tough as its CR would indicate. Sometimes adding a template to a creature that starts out tough does not produce a creature as tough as the template thinks it will be.

The ooze dragon has the shape of a red dragon, even with wings, but it is translucent and oozy. It attacks with its breath weapon first, and it casts spells such as *mage armor* and *shield*, *expeditious retreat*, *false life*, and *protection from energy* (cold) before battle begins if possible. It rarely thinks to use *ray of enfeeblement* or *mirror image*, but you can throw your players for a loop by having it use them.

Note: This creature uses the gelatinous creature template found on page 116 of *Savage Species*.

Gelatinous Adult Red Dragon CR 17

N Huge aberration (augmented dragon, fire)

Init -2; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +14, Spot +15

Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 22)

Languages None

AC 26, touch 6, flat-footed 26

(-2 size, -2 Dex, +20 natural)

hp 297 (22 HD)

Immune fire; sleep, polymorphing, stunning, and paralysis effects

SR 21

Fort +15, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9; +4 against mind-affecting and poison

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee bite +25 (4d6+11 plus 1d8 acid) and
2 claws each +23 (2d6+5 plus 1d8 acid) and
2 wings each +23 (1d8+5 plus 1d8 acid) and
tail slap +23 (2d6+16 plus 1d8 acid) and
slam +23 (2d6+5 plus 1d8 acid)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +35

Atk Options Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Snatch, crush

Special Actions breath weapon

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th):

2nd (6/day) -- *false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 13), *mirror image*

1st (7/day) -- *alarm*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement* (ranged touch +20), *shield*

0 (6/day) -- *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):

6/day -- *locate object*

Abilities Str 33, Dex 6, Con 27, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 12

SQ resilient

Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Power Attack, Recover Breath, Snatch

Skills Hide -6, Listen +14, Spot +15

Hook "An ooze that breathes fire? Run!!!"

Frightful Presence (Ex) A gelatinous adult red dragon can inspire terror by charging, attacking, or flying overhead. Creatures within 180 feet of the dragon that have 22 HD or fewer must attempt a DC 22 Will save. Success indicates that the target is immune to the gelatinous adult red dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds. Those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds.

Acid (Ex) A gelatinous adult red dragon body produces a corrosive slime. Any creature that is struck by a gelatinous adult red dragon's attack automatically takes 1d8 points of acid damage.

Snatch (Ex) Against Small or smaller creatures, bite for 4d6+11 plus 1d8 acid per round or claw for 2d6+5 plus 1d8 acid per round.

Crush (Ex) Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d6+16 points of bludgeoning damage and must succeed on a DC 29 Reflex save or be pinned.

Breath Weapon (Su) 50-ft. cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 12d10 fire, Reflex DC 29 half.

Resilient (Ex) Gelatinous creatures have less defined shapes than the normal creatures they resemble. As a result, it is more difficult to score crippling or killing blows against them. A gelatinous creature cannot be flanked, takes 1d6 less damage from a successful sneak attack, and takes one-half the additional damage dealt by a critical hit.

Half-Troll Dragon or Half-Dragon Troll?

There are two ways to make a creature that is half troll and half red dragon. You can apply the half-dragon template to a troll, or you can apply the half-troll template (from *Fiend Folio*) to a red dragon. To see how these work out, both are presented below and you can see which you like best.

The first one, the half-dragon troll, looks like a troll with red scales and huge red draconic wings. It looks very imposing, but very troll-like, and came about when a dragon mated with a female troll.

The second version, the half-troll dragon, looks like a red dragon with bumps and warts on its skin, and some hair growing around its head ridges. It has a greenish cast to its scales, but that is hard to see unless you are within 60 feet (Spot DC 15 to notice). It might have come about through forcible magical experimentation, though it could have come about through a troll mating with a female red dragon.

Half-Dragon (Red) Troll CR 7

CE Large dragon (augmented giant)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Giant

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 18

(-1 size, +2 Dex, +9 natural)

hp 75 (6 HD); regeneration 5

Immune fire; sleep and paralysis effects

Fort +12, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 60 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws each +13 (1d6+10) and

bite +8 (1d6+5)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +14

Atk Options rend

Special Actions breath weapon

Abilities Str 31, Dex 14, Con 25, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 8

Feats Alertness, Iron Will, Track

Skills Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Search +0, Spot +10, Survival +3, Tumble +6

Hook "Once I have you in my claws, I'll rend you and then bathe you in fire."

Regeneration (Ex) Acid deals normal damage to half-dragon troll. If a half-dragon troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Rend (Ex) A half-dragon troll that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d6+15 points of damage.

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-ft. cone, once every day, damage 6d8 fire, Reflex DC 20 half.

Half-Troll Adult Red Dragon CR 17

CE Huge giant (augmented dragon, fire)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, scent; Listen +24, Spot +24

Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 23)

Languages Draconic

AC 34, touch 9, flat-footed 33

(-2 size, +1 Dex, +25 natural)

hp 319 (22 HD); fast healing 5; DR 5/magic

Immune fire; sleep and paralysis effects

SR 21

Fort +21, **Ref** +14, **Will** +17

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 150 ft. (poor), Flyby Attack, Hover, Wingover

Melee bite +34 (4d6+14) and
2 claws each +32 (2d6+7) and
2 wings each +32 (1d8+7) and
tail slap +32 (2d6+21)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +22; **Grp** +44

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, Snatch, crush, rend

Special Actions breath weapon

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th):

3rd (4/day) -- *dispel magic*, *protection from energy*

2nd (7/day) -- *false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 14), *mirror image*

1st (7/day) -- *alarm*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement* (ranged touch +21), *shield*

0 (6/day) -- *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):

6/day -- *locate object*

Abilities Str 39, Dex 12, Con 27, Int 14, Wis 19, Cha 14

Feats Cleave, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Wingover

Skills Bluff +7, Concentration +18, Diplomacy +11, Escape Artist +11, Listen +24, Search +14, Sense Motive +10, Spot +24, Use Magic Device +12

Hook "Once I have you in my claws, I'll rend you and then bathe you in fire."

Frightful Presence (Ex) A half-troll adult red dragon can inspire terror by charging, attacking, or flying overhead. Creatures within 180 feet of the dragon that have 22 HD or fewer must attempt a DC 23 Will save. Success indicates that the target is immune to the half-troll adult red dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds. Those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds.

Snatch (Ex) Against Small or smaller creatures, bite for 4d6+14 per round or claw for 2d6+7 per round.

Crush (Ex) Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d8+21 points of bludgeoning damage and must succeed on a DC 29 Reflex save or be pinned.

Breath Weapon (Su) 50-ft. cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 12d10 fire, Reflex DC 29 half.

Rend (Ex) A half-troll dragon that hits with both claw attacks latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an extra 2d8+21 points of damage.

Water and Fire Mixed

Who said that you could not mix fire and water? Here is a perfectly good example: a half-water elemental red dragon. And while we're at it, we're giving it another head (the multiheaded template is my favorite). This allows us to make a cryo-based creature, which means it has the water, cold, and fire subtypes. Nothing says a creature cannot have both fire and cold subtypes (just look at Tiamat), though you may not want to make a practice of introducing such creatures into your campaign.

This dragon's skin and scales possess an almost purplish tint -- a mix of the blue-green from the elemental heritage and the red from the dragon heritage. It tends to have more of a nurturing nature than a red dragon normally would have, but watch out if you attack or threaten something under its protection. It lives in the mountains near lakes, since it prefers to live near the water and swim. Its two heads may disconcert any

onlookers, and the fact that it can breathe frost or fire should be a total surprise.

Two-Headed Half-Elemental (Water) Adult Cryo-Red Dragon CR 20

CE Huge outsider (augmented dragon, fire, water, cold)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., keen senses; Listen +32, Spot +32

Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 26)

Languages Draconic

AC 31, touch 8, flat-footed 31

(-2 size, +0 Dex, +23 natural)

hp 324 (24 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune cold; fire; sleep and paralysis effects

SR 21

Fort +21, **Ref** +14, **Will** +19

Speed 40 ft. (6 squares), swim 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), Flyby Attack, Hover, Swim-By Attack, Wingover

Melee 2 bites +34 (4d6+12) and

2 claws each +34 (2d6+6) and

2 wings each +34 (1d8+6) and

tail slap +34 (2d6+18)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +24; **Grp** +44

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Snatch, crush

Special Actions breath weapon

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th):

3rd (5/day) -- *dispel magic*, *protection from energy*

2nd (7/day) -- *false life*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *mirror image*

1st (7/day) -- *alarm*, *expeditious retreat*, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement* (ranged touch +22), *shield*

0 (6/day) -- *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):

6/day -- *locate object*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 24th):

1/day -- *acid fog*, *cone of cold* (DC 19), *control water*, *elemental swarm* (water only), *fog cloud*, *horrid wilting* (DC 22), *ice storm*, *obscuring mist*, *plane shift* (DC 21), *water breathing*

Abilities Str 35, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 18, Wis 21, Cha 18

SQ multiheaded

Feats Combat Reflexes[B], Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative[B], Improved Multiattack[B], Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Power Attack, Recover Breath, Snatch, Swim-By Attack, Wingover

Skills Bluff +29, Concentration +32, Diplomacy +37, Escape Artist +25, Intimidate +33, Listen +32, Search +31, Sense Motive +30, Spellcraft +14, Spot +32, Use Magic Device +29

Hook "My breath will slay you." "No, mine will." "No, mine will."

Frightful Presence (Ex) A two-headed half-elemental (water) adult cryo-red dragon can inspire terror by charging, attacking, or flying overhead. Creatures within 180 feet of the dragon that have 24 HD or fewer must attempt a DC 26 Will save. Success indicates that the target is immune to the two-headed half-elemental (water) adult cryo-red dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds. Those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds.

Snatch (Ex) Against Small or smaller creatures, bite for 4d6+12 per round or claw for 2d6+6 per round.

Crush (Ex) Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d8+18 points of bludgeoning damage and must succeed on a DC 29 Reflex save or be pinned.

Breath Weapon (Su) 50-ft. cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 12d10 fire, Reflex DC 29 half. (Both heads

breathe either fire or cold at the same time; when they do, be sure to roll damage for each head.)

Breath Weapon (Su) 20-ft. line, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 3d6 cold, Reflex DC 29 half. (Both heads breathe either fire or cold at the same time; when they do, be sure to roll damage for each head.)

Multiheaded: Having a redundant head makes a creature more able to survive otherwise lethal attacks. Thus, a *vorpal blade* would have to remove all heads to have its usual effect. Severing a head requires hitting the creature's neck (same AC as creature) with a slashing weapon and dealing damage equal to the multiheaded creature's original hit point total divided by the original number of heads. (The player must declare an attack against the neck just before making the attack roll.) The severed head dies, and a natural reflex seals the neck shut to prevent further blood loss. The creature can no longer attack with the severed head but takes no other penalties. A severed head cannot regrow naturally.

Feats Not Presented in the *Player's Handbook* or *Monster Manual*

Improved Multiattack (from *Draconomicon*): The usual -5 (-2 if you have Multiattack) penalty on attack rolls for secondary attacks does not apply to your secondary attacks with natural weapons. The damage bonus for such attacks is still only 1/2 your Strength bonus, if any.

Recover Breath (from *Draconomicon*): You reduce the interval between uses of your breath weapon. You wait 1 round less than usual before breathing again, but always at least 1 round. The feat stacks with the effects of metabreath feats, reducing the total time you must wait to use your breath weapon again by 1 round.

Swim-By Attack (from *Stormwrack*): When swimming, you can take a move action and another standard action (such as an attack) at any point during the move. You cannot take a second move action during a round when you make a swim-by attack.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the **RPGA** Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the *Living Greyhawk* and *Living Force* campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing. He also models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno and spends as much time as possible with his wife and many pets.

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